Baptist NICU Parent Advisory Council parents participate in Neonatal Nurses Annual Conference

One of the objectives of the PAC is to be the voice of NICU families and help educate hospital staff about the needs, perceptions and points of view of the parents. That is why several PAC members were members of a panel in the most important neonatal nurses conference in Florida.

Established in 1994, the Southeast Florida Association of Neonatal Nurses (SEFANN) is the local leader in neonatal nursing education and community service. On March 11 and 12 of 2010 they held their two-day annual conference, Hot Topics in the Tropics Neonatal Nursing Conference, which featured local and nationally recognized speakers.

During the event, four representatives of Baptist’s Hospital Parent Advisory Council spoke about the importance of a family centered care approach in the NICU. In their presentations, Mrs. Vernon, Mrs. Bates, Mrs. Adessi, and Mrs. Hugony-Troillard highlighted the essential role played by neonatal nurses, not only because they were their babies’ key caregivers but also because they provided parents with much needed emotional support.

“Given the importance of the role of neonatal nurses, it is crucial that they are in constant communication with the parents, so that we can keep working as a team to build a better NICU”, said Mrs. Lelis Vernon, from the PAC. The extensive and lively Q&A session that followed the panel was an excellent opportunity to initiate a constructive dialogue between nurses and parents, where PAC members and the audience shared their personal experiences on issues such as information sharing, visitation policies and communication between hospital staff and families.
INTERVIEW with YANI PASCUAL, 2009 NICU NURSE OF THE YEAR

They comfort, they listen, they care—as a popular saying goes, “nurses are angels in comfortable shoes.” In addition to basic nursing training, NICU nurses at Baptist Children’s Hospital undergo a 22-week program that includes both classroom and time in the unit. During this residency they are paired with a preceptor—a peer with clinical expertise in the unit and preceptor training.

The standards of excellence are high. NICU staff is constantly looking for ways to improve and provide the best possible care.

One of the tools they use is the National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators, which helps them track their data and compare the unit to other NICUs of similar size across the nation. Baptist Children’s Hospital NICU sends data regarding many initiatives like pain assessment, IV infiltrates, central line infections and skin breakdown to see how they compare and then look at ways to improve their practice.

They also participate actively in the Vermont Oxford Network (VON), a non-profit voluntary collaboration of health care professionals dedicated to improving the quality and safety of medical care for newborn infants and their families. VON is comprised of over 800 Neonatal Intensive Care Units around the world. Every year, the almost 90 NICU nurses are invited to vote for the “nurse of the year,” the caregiver that helps solve problems, performs quality patient care, adheres to standards of excellence, takes the initiative to educate others, holds high ethical standards, actively participates in NICU activities and honors the caring spirit of the nursing practice.

It is one of the highest honors a nurse can receive, and this year it went to Yani Pascual, from the night shift, who has been with Baptist for five years.

Q&A to Yani Pascual

What does this recognition mean to you?

It is truly an honor to be chosen as the nurse of the year by my peers. Our NICU has a great group of doctors, nurses, therapists and specialists, and I am proud to be a part of this team.

What are the main challenges of your job?

Everything is a challenge when you are dealing with saving lives. It’s not only the clinical aspect of it but also the emotional one that presents a major challenge in this career. One of the things I love the most about my job is that you learn something new every day. Technologies evolve at the speed of light, and it is crucial to stay ahead of the curve.

The most rewarding aspect is, of course, witnessing the recovery of a baby and sharing the joy of his or her family.

If you had to give a piece of advice to NICU parents, what would that be?

I would tell them to be patient and hold on to every piece of good news they receive. We have a team of very well trained staff that is here for them and their baby. This is not only their journey as parents but ours too, and together we can make it through, one day at a time.

The best thing I can do is listen to them and provide as much support as possible and help them put things in perspective during these difficult times.

Your interaction with NICU parents is an important aspect of your job, and many times they can feel stressed and frustrated. How do you deal with this situation?

I try to put myself in their shoes and realize that any one of us could be in their place. Sometimes parents are frustrated and they want answers.
As of December 2009, Baptist’s NICU offers professional psychological support to families of patients who request or need it. This initiative was launched by the Pediatric Advanced Care Team (PACT), an interdisciplinary palliative care team that helps manage the physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs of the patients and their families.

“The psychologists were added to the team because we felt some of the families of our patients had unmet psychological needs, and the physicians had expressed that they felt we were missing an important part of the support,” said Jennifer Couceyro, PACT coordinator.

When the nurse practitioner or the palliative care team considers that a family might need support in addition to the one offered by social services, they consult the team of psychologists led by Gary Lancelotta. One of the four professionals of Child Psychology Associates conducts an assessment of the situation and develops a plan of action that might include family conferences or phone visits. This support is free of cost for the family.

If you are interested in knowing more about this service, please contact Jennifer Couceyro at jennifec@baptisthealth.net or 786-596-7836.

TIP

“One thing that helped me was spending time in the meditation garden, next to the chapel”.

-Stacia VanBaalen - NICU graduate mom
I was 35½ weeks pregnant and counting the weeks for the birth of my daughter, Arianna Bella. On January 15, 2008, I noticed my baby was not moving as usual and began to experience uncomfortable Braxton Hicks contractions. Instinctively, I just knew something was wrong. My husband and I decided to go to Baptist Hospital, where I was immediately evaluated. After the biophysical profile came in at 2, the doctors prepared for an emergency C-section. While they were administering the epidural, I remember feeling completely helpless and began praying to God for Him to take complete control. A few minutes later, my daughter was delivered. She let out a loud cry that brought us great relief, but shortly after giving her a kiss, she was rushed to the NICU.

At that point, we had no idea what was happening. We wondered if she would be all right, why she was being taken to the NICU and how long she would be there. It was all extremely stressful. Her level of infection was constantly being monitored and she had to undergo a spinal tap procedure to test for meningitis. We felt confident that Baptist was a remarkable hospital with extraordinary physicians and nurses. We knew that she was being treated by the best!

When we first saw Arianna Bella, her skin tone was yellow/green from the lack of blood circulating through her body. She was treated with three different antibiotics upon admission to the NICU. After doing a culture on the placenta, it was determined that I had contracted listeriosis, which is a bacteria found in improperly cooked foods, such as deli meats, soft cheeses, salads and the like. I researched listeria and learned that there was a possibility that she could be deaf, blind and with long-term neurological damage. A high death rate exists for fetuses that contract listeria at or near term. But, this data did not waiver our faith in God. Our family and friends prayed fervently everyday for her healing. We knew that God's miracles are based on faith, not statistics!

Through the power of prayer and the wisdom and care of the amazing doctors and nurses, she was completely healed and was able to go home after 21 days. Our little girl is now 100% healthy, full of life, energy and happiness. I thank God every single day for my ob/gyn, Dr. Jason James, as well as the doctors and nurses at Baptist who worked so diligently to save her life! They are all amazing!

After our family’s miracle, and recognizing how blessed we truly were, my husband and I had to give something back. Thus, we established a non-profit organization “Bella Preemie Miracles” to help families in need with premature babies. We donate clothes to the NICU and help families in any way that we can. We also pray for their baby's healing. We know firsthand what a difficult time they are facing, and we want to let them know they are not alone. We hope to make a small difference in their journey.

You can contact Gabriela and Steven Adessi at bellapreemie@bellsouth.net

DID YOU KNOW...

… that there is a dry cleaner’s inside Baptist Hospital? The One and Only is conveniently located on the ground floor, near the rehabilitation center, and opens Monday through Friday – Monday and Wednesday from 7 am to noon; Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2 pm to 6 pm.